



PATENT

Case Docket No. TMILLR.017A

Date: March 9, 2004

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant : Thomas J. Miller
Appl. No. : 10/777,401
Filed : February 12, 2004
For : PLUG RETENTION
APPARATUS
Examiner : Unknown
Group Art Unit : Unknown

I hereby certify that this correspondence and all marked attachments are being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on

March 10, 2004

(Date)

Michael H. Trenholm, Reg. No. 37,743

TRANSMITTAL LETTER

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Dear Sir:

Enclosed for filing in the above-identified application are:

- (X) A Petition to Make Special.
- (X) An Information Disclosure Statement.
- (X) A PTO Form 1449 with nine (9) references.
- (X) A check in the amount of \$130.00 to cover the above petition fee is enclosed.
- (X) The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required, or credit any overpayment, to Account No. 11-1410.
- (X) Return prepaid postcard.

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Registration No. 37,743
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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE



Applicant : Thomas J. Miller
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 Filed : February 12, 2004
 For : PLUG RETENTION
 APPARATUS
 Examiner : Not assigned

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

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March 10, 2004

(Date)

Michael H. Trenholm, Reg. No. 37,743

PETITION TO MAKE SPECIAL UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.102 AND M.P.E.P. § 708.02(VIII)

Commissioner for Patents
 P.O. Box 1450
 Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Dear Sir:

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.102 and M.P.E.P. § 708.02(VIII) Applicant hereby petitions to make the above-captioned application (the "Application") special in order to advance its examination in the Patent and Trademark Office.

Petition to Make Special Under 37 C.F.R. § 1.102 and M.P.E.P. § 708.02(VIII)

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.102 and M.P.E.P. § 708.02(VIII), Applicant hereby petitions to make the Application special in order to expedite its examination. The application has not yet received any examination.

The claim and drawings of the Application are directed to a single invention. Should a restriction requirement be necessary, Applicant respectfully requests that prompt telephone notice be given to Applicant's counsel, at which time Applicant will make an election without traverse.

A pre-examination search was conducted in the following areas:

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Class 439 (ELECTRICAL CONNECTORS), subclasses 367, 368, 369;

Applicant submits herewith a copy of each reference not already of record deemed most closely related to the subject matter encompassed by the Application, including all references located during this search.

Discussion of the References

Applicant provides the following discussion of the references, which points out with the particularity required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.111(b) and (c) how the claimed subject matter is distinguishable over the references.

United States Patent Number 1,665,095 issued to Henry discloses a fastener for preventing the accidental disconnection of the separable sections of a detachable connecting plug adapted to be inserted into an electric light socket. The Henry patent does not disclose or teach a first plug member having a retainer assembly that adjustably constrains axial movement along a longitudinal axis (e.g. a retainer assembly threadably engaged with the plug member, See independent Claims 1, 16; and a plug member including a threaded shaft portion to which a ring member having threads engages and is moveable along the shaft portion, See independent Claim 9), wherein the retainer assembly is moveable towards or away from the first plug member and can be tightened against a second plug member to thereby retain the first plug member and second plug member in contact with each other.

The electrical plug lock disclosed in the Henry patent prevents separation of the plug sections by providing a ring member and a disk member swingable into and out of position to secure the electrical connection. These components do not provide the ability to adjustably tighten and secure the plug members with respect to one another in the manner claimed by Applicant. Furthermore, the electrical plug lock as disclosed in Henry is not adjustable to accommodate different plug sizes and configurations.

United States Patent Number 2,753,536 issued to Tjader discloses a holding clamp that embraces the female and male plug members of a connector, preventing the plug members from separating. The Tjader patent does not disclose or teach a first plug member having a retainer assembly that adjustably constrains axial movement along a longitudinal axis (e.g. a retainer assembly threadably engaged with the plug member, See independent Claims 1, 16; and a plug member including a threaded shaft portion to which a ring member having threads engages and is moveable along the shaft portion, See independent Claim 9), wherein the retainer assembly is

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moveable towards or away from the first plug member and can be tightened against a second plug member to thereby retain the first plug member and second plug member in contact with each other.

The holding clamp disclosed in Tjader comprises a pair of elongated jaws and a jaw compressing ring positioned about the jaws for clamping engagement of the jaws about a pair of cable connectors. Tjader further discloses a spring positioned about a cable carrying one of the cable connectors and interposed between the cable connector and the holding clamp. The spring is used to resist movement in one direction of the cable connector between the jaws of the holding clamp. These components do not provide the ability to adjustably tighten and secure the plug members with respect to one another in the manner claimed by Applicant. The engagement of the retainer assembly as claimed by Applicant is distinguished from that of Tjader as it is configured to resist movement in at least two directions. Furthermore, the engagement of the retainer assembly is not susceptible to spring wear and diminished retention over time as compared to the holding clamp described by Tjader.

United States Patent Number 4,204,738 issued to Tillotson discloses a device for securely retaining electrical connectors in a mated configuration. The Tillotson patent does not disclose or teach a first plug member having a retainer assembly that adjustably constrains axial movement along a longitudinal axis (e.g. a retainer assembly threadably engaged with the plug member, See independent Claims 1, 16; and a plug member including a threaded shaft portion to which a ring member having threads engages and is moveable along the shaft portion, See independent Claim 9), wherein the retainer assembly is moveable towards or away from the first plug member and can be tightened against a second plug member to thereby retain the first plug member and second plug member in contact with each other.

The electrical plug lock disclosed in the Tillotson patent comprises a U-shaped bail including a clip rod pivotally mounted to a first electrical connector. The clip rod is positioned about a second connector having a plurality of connection points spaced axially about the second connector that are configured to accept the clip rod which retain the first and second electrical connectors in a mated configuration. These components do not provide the ability to adjustably tighten and secure the plug members with respect to one another in the manner claimed by Applicant.

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United States Patent Number 4,875,874 issued to Windsor discloses an electrical connector securing arrangement for use upon the female socket of an extension cord. The Windsor patent does not disclose or teach a first plug member having a retainer assembly that adjustably constrains axial movement along a longitudinal axis (e.g. a retainer assembly threadably engaged with the plug member, See independent Claims 1, 16; and a plug member including a threaded shaft portion to which a ring member having threads engages and is moveable along the shaft portion, See independent Claim 9), wherein the retainer assembly is moveable towards or away from the first plug member and can be tightened against a second plug member to thereby retain the first plug member and second plug member in contact with each other.

The electrical connector securing arrangement disclosed in Windsor comprises a socket having a pivotally mounted rotatable latch member and a compatible male plug to be utilized with the socket. These components do not provide the ability to adjustably tighten and secure the plug members with respect to one another in the manner claimed by Applicant. The electrical connector disclosed in Windsor utilizes a recess to which the latch member is engaged in a single position and therefore lacks the ability to be adjustably tightened and loosened in the manner described by Applicant.

United States Patent Number 5,211,573 issued to Cross discloses a method for retaining locked engagement for the plug end of an electrical cord. The Cross patent does not disclose or teach a first plug member having a retainer assembly that adjustably constrains axial movement along a longitudinal axis (e.g. a retainer assembly threadably engaged with the plug member, See independent Claims 1, 16; and a plug member including a threaded shaft portion to which a ring member having threads engages and is moveable along the shaft portion, See independent Claim 9), wherein the retainer assembly is moveable towards or away from the first plug member and can be tightened against a second plug member to thereby retain the first plug member and second plug member in contact with each other.

The coupling device disclosed in Cross comprises a single-piece body member adapted to friction fit with an electrical cord securing the plug ends of the electrical cord. This device does not provide the ability to adjustably tighten and secure the plug members with respect to one another in the manner claimed by Applicant.

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United States Patent Number 5,584,720 issued to Elswick discloses an electrical cord plug lock. The Elswick patent does not disclose or teach a first plug member having a retainer assembly that adjustably constrains axial movement along a longitudinal axis (e.g. a retainer assembly threadably engaged with the plug member, See independent Claims 1, 16; and a plug member including a threaded shaft portion to which a ring member having threads engages and is moveable along the shaft portion, See independent Claim 9), wherein the retainer assembly is moveable towards or away from the first plug member and can be tightened against a second plug member to thereby retain the first plug member and second plug member in contact with each other.

The most relevant embodiment of the plug lock disclosed in Elswick comprises first and second cord clamps secured by coupling links that are retained by link clamps present on the first cord clamp. The link clamps retain the coupling links through a locking button to releasably lock the coupling links. These components do not provide the ability to adjustably tighten and secure the plug members with respect to one another in the manner claimed by Applicant. The plug lock disclosed in Elswick is inferior to that claimed by Applicant for reasons including the susceptibility of the locking button to be inadvertently triggered and the less robust construction of the coupling links making them susceptible to stripping and subsequent release of the cord clamps.

United States Patent Numbers 5,785,547 and 6,056,580 issued to Cross disclose retention devices for holding a cord. The Cross patents do not disclose or teach a first plug member having a retainer assembly that adjustably constrains axial movement along a longitudinal axis (e.g. a retainer assembly threadably engaged with the plug member, See independent Claims 1, 16; and a plug member including a threaded shaft portion to which a ring member having threads engages and is moveable along the shaft portion, See independent Claim 9), wherein the retainer assembly is moveable towards or away from the first plug member and can be tightened against a second plug member to thereby retain the first plug member and second plug member in contact with each other.

The cord retention devices disclosed in the Cross patents prevent separation of the separable sections of the plug by providing a retention device including spaced arms and a grip slot between said arms to engage the sections of the plug. These components do not provide the ability to adjustably tighten and secure the plug members with respect to one another in the

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manner claimed by Applicant. Furthermore, the cord retention devices as disclosed in the Cross patents are not adjustable to accommodate different plug sizes and configurations.

United States Patent Number 6,080,004 issued to Kovacik discloses a locking yoke for securing a pair of separable plug members. The Kovacik patent does not disclose or teach a first plug member having a retainer assembly that adjustably constrains axial movement along a longitudinal axis (e.g. a retainer assembly threadably engaged with the plug member, See independent Claims 1, 16; and a plug member including a threaded shaft portion to which a ring member having threads engages and is moveable along the shaft portion, See independent Claim 9), wherein the retainer assembly is moveable towards or away from the first plug member and can be tightened against a second plug member to thereby retain the first plug member and second plug member in contact with each other.

The locking yoke disclosed in the Kovacik patent comprises pivotally mounted leg members attached to boss members formed on one of the plug members and a pair of cooperating spaced apart elements for frictionally engaging the electrical conduit leading away from the other of the plug members. These components do not provide the ability to adjustably tighten and secure the plug members with respect to one another in the manner claimed by Applicant.

In view of the foregoing discussion, Applicant respectfully submits that the present invention is patentable over both of the references discussed above. More specifically, the references do not anticipate or render obvious the design of the Application. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests expedited allowance of the Application.

Applicant submits herewith an Information Disclosure Statement including one copy of each of the references deemed most closely related to the subject matter encompassed by the claim of the Application.

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CONCLUSION

Applicant respectfully submits that all of the requirements under 37 C.F.R. § 1.102 and M.P.E.P. § 708.02(VIII) to make the Application special have been satisfied and requests that this Petition be granted. A check in the amount of \$130.00 for payment of the fee under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17(i) is enclosed. Please charge any additional fees or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 11-1410.

Dated: 2/9/04

Respectfully submitted,

KNOBBE, MARTENS, OLSON & BEAR, LLP

By: 

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INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Applicant : Thomas J. Miller
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For : PLUG RETENTION APPARATUS
Examiner : Unknown
Group Art Unit : Unknown

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Dear Sir:

Enclosed is form PTO-1449 listing nine (9) references that are also enclosed.

This Information Disclosure Statement is being filed with a Petition to Make Special
Under 37 C.F.R. § 1.102.

Respectfully submitted,

KNOBBE, MARTENS, OLSON & BEAR, LLP

Dated: 3/9/04

By: [Signature]

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FORM PTO-1449

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICEATTY. DOCKET NO.
TMILLR.017AAPPLICATION NO.
10/777,401INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT
BY APPLICANTAPPLICANT
Thomas J. MillerFILING DATE
February 12, 2004GROUP
Unknown

USE SEVERAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY)

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

EXAMINER INITIAL		DOCUMENT NUMBER	DATE	NAME	CLASS	SUBCLASS	FILING DATE (IF APPROPRIATE)
	1	1,665,095	04/03/28	Henry			
	2	2,753,536	07/03/56	Tjader			
	3	4,204,738	05/27/80	Tillotson			
	4	4,875,874	10/24/89	Windsor, Jr.			
	5	5,211,573	05/18/93	Cross			
	6	5,584,720	12/17/96	Elswick			
	7	5,785,547	07/28/98	Cross et al.			
	8	6,056,580	05/02/00	Cross et al.			
	9	6,080,004	06/27/00	Kovacik et al.			
	10						

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

EXAMINER INITIAL		DOCUMENT NUMBER	DATE	COUNTRY	CLASS	SUBCLASS	TRANSLATION	
							YES	NO
	11							
	12							
	13							

EXAMINER
INITIAL

OTHER DOCUMENTS (INCLUDING AUTHOR, TITLE, DATE, PERTINENT PAGES, ETC.)

	14	
	15	
	16	
	17	
	18	

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EXAMINER

DATE CONSIDERED

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